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Orthodox Congregational Church  
Manchester, Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-268

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MASS.

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Massachusetts

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Frank Chouteau Brown, District Officer  
76 Chestnut St., Boston, Mass.

ADDENDUM TO  
ORTHODOX CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
Central and Church Streets  
Manchester  
Essex County  
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-268

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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

*Addendum To:*  
ORTHODOX CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

HABS No. MA-268

Location: Central and Church Streets, Manchester, Essex County, Massachusetts.

Significance: Copied from the *Country Builder's Assistant*, America's first architectural treatise, this classical form became the archetype of early American ecclesiastical architectural practices. Tall steeples like the Orthodox Congregational Church spire graced cities across the country, visually linking those places with New England, and so, with its values that helped shape America.

Description: Covered by clapboard, the frame structure looks to the west. Dominating the front facade is a three bay, two story pedimented pavilion. The pavilion projects outward from the main block of the structure. It is finished in the Ionic order. The main block is two stories in height, covered by a pitch roof, and it is three bays deep. The first floor is punctuated by three fanlit doorways. The central door slightly larger than those flanking it; at its second story level, a central Palladian window corresponds to the door below, providing further emphasis to the central bay. Rectangular windows appear on either side of the Palladian opening. The pavilion roof helps support a steeple, which has a large lunette on its facade, and a large clock above it. Clocks also appear on the north and south faces of the steeple. Above the clock level is an open colonnaded belfry, surmounted by an elaborate cupola, topped by a metal weathercock. The weathercock was made in 1750. When it was built, the church dominated the town common, for its spire is visible from most points in the district as well as from the coast.

History: Church records cite the construction date as 1809, though discussions about erecting a new structure began in 1804. The town built the church, using volunteers and local materials, to resemble plate 33 of Asher Benjamin's *Country Builder's Assistant* (1797). Benjamin's treatise was published in Massachusetts, and it went through several re-print editions. The selectmen of the town probably owned a copy, therefore, the specification for the end view of the porch and steeple to mimic a certain plate in Benjamin's handbook a decade later is not exceptional. The records also specify that the porch was to be finished in the Ionic order and the rest of the structure in the Tuscan. Also noted is that Samuel McIntire was paid for his services. Unfortunately, the town fathers did not say how much McIntire was paid or what he did for them.

This meetinghouse, home to Manchester's first religious society, accommodated town meetings, selectmen meetings, and one of the country's earliest Sunday schools. The congregation continues to use it today.

Sources: Robert Booth, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Manchester Village Historic District," National Park Service, 1988.

Historic Buildings of Massachusetts. edited by John C. Poppeliers. Scribner Historic Building Series. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976. Photographic catalogue of historic buildings, built primarily during the colonial and federal periods.

Inventory Form, Massachusetts Historical Commission, 1975.